Tuberose and Meadowsweet

Raffalovich

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Tuberose and Meadowsweet.

BY

MARK ANDRÉ RAFFALOVICH.

Such words of message have dead flowers to say
* * * * * * *
Before I throw them and these words away.

LONDON:
DAVID BOGUE, 27 KING WILLIAM STREET,
STRAND.
1885.

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TO

A. St. J.

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To the One I Love Most.

WHEN at thy voice unheard,
The song of fancy's bird,
My heart is still
Nor flutters for a single word;
And my caresses leave thee chill
And thine no longer thrill,
Then would I sigh and say to yesterday:
"O keep the past, he will not stay,
Lull him with love's benumbing anodyne,
Whisper thy litany soft line by line,
With praise and prayer and drowsy wine."
O love of mine, time worships at thy shrine!
When song and kisses cease
To flow from lips at ease
With touch of thee,
And thou lets fall the rusty keys

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Of paradisal ecstasy
Beyond the land and sea,
Then would I sigh and say to yesterday :
" O keep the past, he will not stay,
Lull him with love and sleep and slumberous wine,
With praise and prayer and chant divine,
Whisper thy litany soft line by line."
O love of mine, time worships at thy shrine!

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The Choice.

SHALL later friendship sing
  Of love the early comer?
Shall we be friends in Spring
  And lovers through the Summer?

What does my lover say?
  Which would my friend have rather,
Touch, taste, and scent to-day,
  Or hands that pause to gather?

Unshaken leave the bough
  And trouble not clear laughter?
Shall we be lovers now
  And let all else come after?

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On distant meadows then,
  With none but we to love us,
Far from forgotten men,
  Grasses and stars above us !

O palace, built for us,
  Of pure and precious marble,
Birds not yet venturous
  To coo and sweetly warble !

Shall later friendship sing
  Of love the early comer?
Shall we make love in Spring,
  Learn friendship in the Summer?

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Absence.

I TROD with pride the Milky Way ;
I know the flowers of every land ;
The night has been to me like day,
An open book I understand ;
The stars and I hold fellowship.
But who can give me now thy hand
Or show thy curve of lash and lip ?

All scent, all colour and all sound,
Things sweet to touch and taste and smell,
Great beauty in Greek marble bound,
The passing beauty like a spell,
Music and mirth and shapeliness,
Of these each has a word to tell
But void of thee and purposeless.

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What can you have to say, O sea,
O wind, that never has been heard?
Speak then like absent love to me.
The woods are weary of each bird.
A newer song! Old tunes do fail!
O for a true and tuneless word!
The evening hates the nightingale.

Among the stars I lose my way,
They dazzle me with their long hair;
Their breath is cold, they turn away
Or probe me with a shining stare.
The moon is madness, looked upon:
But she is kind and she might care.
Alas! She's with Endymion!

O none can help me, none but thou!
My lips are longing, and my eyes,
O do not linger, O come now,
Teach me the meaning of my sighs.
For thou hast sighed, I know thou hast,
For one most beautiful and wise:
O let me learn the mystic past!

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Magic Hair.

MAGIC, magic, on thy hair !
Kisses, kisses, from thy brow
Firm and soft and warm and fair,
Resting on thy lashes now !
Magic, magic, in thy hair,
Lover, lovers, I and thou !

Dear laburnum be thy hair,
Oleanders kisses be ;
Mouth of mine lays rosily
On laburnum lying there.
Smooth laburnum be thy hair,
Oleanders kissing thee,
Thy pollen-coloured sweet delicious hair.

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Thou hast an amulet, a charm,
That I would circle round my naked arm
To give it strength to hold thee firm and warm,
Thou couldst not draw thyself away, not yet,
Not yet, not yet,
Till witchery forsake and I forget
The scent and colour of the amulet,
That finely wrought attractive charm
Against my breast most warm
Circled about my arm.
When wilt thou give in one dear darkened chamber
Thy pollen-coloured sweet delicious hair,
My darling's, thine, like nought save dreamt of amber,
As faint as fresh mown hay and much more fair.
When wilt thou give it to my soul to wear,
O when again thy gift of softest amber,
My magic bracelet, when and where,
In what dear chamber?
O where thou wilt, O mine, but soon, and soon,
O when the world is sleeping, while the moon
Kisses her shepherd with a kiss less fair
Than my strong yearning for thy tangled hair,
Thy pollen-coloured sweet delicious hair!

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Honeysuckle, pink and creamy,
Like thy honeyed hair and lashes,
Like thy skin and lashes dreamy,
Coral amber bloom that flashes;
Sunflower of a perfect morn,
Fine persistent pollen-powder,
Dry mimosa's gold newborn;
Love the fairest are not prouder
Of their fairness, love most fair,
Than thy lover of thy hair!
Love, the proudest are less fair
Than thy delicious matchless-coloured hair!

Exultant one! Through love's election
Cup and standard-bearer of love's perfection,
Be thou true life and higher resurrection!
For thee, loves died: their breath at thine grew chilly,
Be thine less chilly!
My tall white vision, thou, my darling lily,
Growing above those dead that lie so stilly,
Thou fancy's choice and dear election,
Increase in bloom's perfection
And subtle resurrection.

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When in one dreamful chamber wilt thou twine
Thy pollen-coloured sweet delicious hair,
Amber of none save only dreamers', mine,
As faint as fresh-mown hay and much more fair,
When wilt thou twine it round my soul to wear?
Armour of love, O shield of love, divine,
Magnetic ardour, when and where,
O singers nine
That hear the voice of lovely-haired Apollo!
Uncaptured dove, O much desirous swallow,
Bird of desire, most pure, most holy dove,
Hellenic rapture, guide me to my love
And thy delicious pollen-coloured hair!

Kisses, kisses, on thy hair,
Kisses, kisses, that begin
On the cheek or near the chin,
Firm and soft and warm and fair,
On thy lids and lashes thin,
Kisses, kisses, on thy hair!

Dear laburnum be thy hair,
Oleanders kisses be;
Lips of mine press rosily

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On laburnum tangled there.
Bright laburnum be thy hair,
Oleanders kissing thee.

Magic, magic, on thy hair !
Kisses, kisses, from thy brow ;
Kisses, kisses, in thy hair,
Lovers, lovers, I and thou !
Magic, magic, in thy hair,
Thy sweet delicious pollen-coloured hair !

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Mystic Love.

I.

O LIDS unlifted at young love's appealing,
O strangely happy lashes on thy cheek,
That touch soft-shadowed skin and have no feeling,
O firm fair mouth, O lips that will not speak!
In darkness and in silence love high-shrouded,
Strong sunlike love, so great, so greatly bold,
On what dear coloured skies, unstained, unclouded,
Will thy lids open when my eyes behold?
Until to them my soul takes flight nor alters
From its right course to thee, my North, my South,
My life a bow that trembles when love falters,
My soul an arrow from my eyes and mouth,
The aim I know not unto which I move,
My soul an arrow and the archer Love

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II.

Woodland of morn, where I my love have met,
Lovers and friends and lords of springtime weather,
Upon the hills of dawn alone together!
Before the later, early violet!
September places where the lips are wet,
Salt of sea-kisses like a sea-gull's feather,
And Yorkshire moors of amethyst and heather,
Upon the evening plains, dost thou forget?

Canst thou remember, like a mystic lover?
That dream of thine, those shrouded limbs were mine,
And mine the eyes that never would uncover,
And mine the hands that lingered when in thine;
If thine in dreams I am and mine thou art,
Have I not in thee, thou in me some part?

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III.

One said to me in scorn : "Man, thou art wise,
But love is more than wisdom. Thou dost love,
And love is only madness. Scarf and glove
Of love! Have they been laid before thine eyes?
Hast thou thy lover's colour? Fool, arise
And call the lion to protect the dove,
The dove to help the tiger. Leave thy love
And clasp fair Wisdom's hand. Man, thou art wise."

How should I laugh at scorn, and scorn instead,
If I could feel my cheeks rose-red and pale
Beneath love's answering dear pale and red :
If love's far eyes were steadfast, and love's head
Bent unto mine, my story grown love's tale,
Love's eyes, the stormless ways whereon I sail.

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IV.

Mouth of the scarlet of the mountain ash !
As beautiful as silence to a lover
After speech, quiver now each lovely lash,
O lids beloved, loved no less, uncover !
Are they like water coloured from the skies ;
Dark Avon when forget-me-nots are bluer,
Or in the pool sun-sheltered night thy eyes ?
But this I know they open on none truer.
Is aconite to be my nightingale,
My evening anthem, bloom of love's election ?
Pale violet, speedwell or lilac pale,
Or paler lavender, my song's protection,
    The colour that must dye my verses through
    And stain them worthy, grey or brown or blue ?

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V.

There is one hour so jubilant and pure
It feels the soul's dear breath live with its breath,
And from that faintest touch must long endure
Somewhat to make so sweet the thought of death.
Is it a shadow of a joy unfelt
Save in that most responsive brief embrace,
A fancy of a future love has knelt
And wept to miss in yesterday's disgrace
As in to-day's romantic imagery ?
Or rather, sadly say, the certain pain
That this one minute's wealth can never be,
The soul and body lips to lips again,
    Till grief enjoy the paradisal deep
    Or death to love give answer in a sleep ?

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VI.

The hands of death life's gate have shut behind me,
The place is cold and close the cords that bind me;
Here thou must not come if thou still dost love me.
Love, I am far away, thou couldst not find me,
Shrouded and thin, with earth and stones above me;
Sad thy sighs, cold, thy fingers could not move me.

When laughter fails, and in thy empty chamber,
In darkness and alone thou dost remember
What lids were fervent once for thine and yearning,
Whose lips then called thy hair their magic amber,
O to thy lover with a gasp returning,
O then my dead limbs will hold thee back, spurning.

But when thou lovest once again to shiver
In love and music's most desirous fever,
Thy darling's hand in thine, thine on thy dearest,
While night or day slips like a long swift river,
On thy dear shoulder to thy heart the nearest,
Mine, mine, will throb and beat the breast thou
hearest!

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VII.

Sad eyes or weary and to mine the fairest!
What would I give to look up at those eyes?
Each dawn, each noon, in none of which thou sharest,
The star's beginning and the dream that dies.
What more? The lake where once I loved a lily
And let it fall and float, one nenuphar!
What else? London, the ways of Piccadilly,
When overhead one sees a frozen star.
O sleepless eyes and eyelids, eyes of slumber,
Lethean, marble-cold, with lashes straight.
What else? My other loves that fall and cumber.
What more? To-day. To-morrow does not wait.
What more stern eyes and passionate? What else?
No more, no more, until thy breath compels.

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VIII.

Beauty I worshipped, love I made my slave—
The idol by the servant could be broken—
My lips from others take what my lips gave :
But now, O sweet, another voice has spoken :
That love is more than beauty was my creed :
Beauty is less than love I still discover,
But I am weak and love is lord indeed.
O love is lord, and thou art love, O lover !
Garden of pride, O lofty house of pride !
Since love has come against you newly risen,
From places where he slumbered lovely-eyed,
Must deep desire of love then be my prison ?
    O cruel, thou and love are one to me :
    But I am love also : then happy we !

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IX.

Between thy roseleaf mouth love made to bear
The silent burden of a shyer rose,
That strangely parts the lips whereon it blows,
To budding laughter blooming unaware :
Between the curves of chin and throat and hair,
Though pleasure spell the tale that passion knows,
Dearest, my love no longer only glows
Beneath thy slumberous paradisal stare.
Since in the likeness of delight thy love
On answering wings descended from above,
Dumb skies responding with mere loveliness,
The worlds that waited but for thy control
Receive with litanies and praise and bless
Thy beauty clad in garments of thy soul.

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X.

O why have I not loved you like my soul,
Mine garmented in fleshly eloquence,
A visible and ultimate control
Irradiated clear to every sense?
    O fair enough to mean my soul to me,
    O limbs that mirrored when I could not see!

O long before, O why were you not there?
So long ago, with pain that much allures,
And passionate as my most earnest care.
You might have come. What better things were yours,
    What distant paradisal solitude,
    O mouth by mighty kisses unsubdued!

And you were statue-like and marble-mute,
An abstract presence or a bloodless life,
When wan with burning hours irresolute
I made my choice of everlasting strife,
    Responsive only to the love I feel,
    A foe to rapture's commonplace repeal.

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XI.

Since love has led my mouth so near to thine
That with my darling's life my life must ache,
A restless craving keeps my soul awake,
Fed on thy lips pure crimson anodyne;
While daylong dreams remember line by line
Love's tale my kisses whispered for thy sake
When on dear hands and hair they sought to slake
Desire that drew together thine and mine.

Herald of beauty, well of early grace
And love, could young Narcissus see thy face,
A holy miracle, a marvel fresh,
Before the altar built of lovely stone,
His heart would surely practise like my own
Soul's worship in the temple of the flesh.

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XII.

Sweetest, when fair of limbs and strong, thou rules
The land of laughter till the end of mirth,
Not where the fields are dry or grass is coolest,
Not when thy darling calls thee beautifullest
Must I be thought of laid beneath the earth.

O not with rotting corpses, things that moulder,
O not with death, the lank anatomy,
Am I to be dreamt of: but on thy shoulder
My hand will linger, dead, and hardly colder
Than in my life my fondest touch of thee.

Not in the graveyard's tranquillest repining,
But like a living love on thy warm breast,
My arms around thy arms most dearly twining,
Close to thy heart, that beats unchecked reclining,
In thy life's mansion an untroubled guest.

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Angel of Desire.

I LOVED thee when our lives and lips were far :
When beauty's marble mouth would speak of thee,
And passion, smiting vaguely, left a scar
On my soul branded with thy mystery.
It was thy voice unheard that made so sweet
The thrill of words in praise of face and limbs :
Thy hair was all my light; and at thy feet
Religious fairness sang romantic hymns.
Since near to thee my lips have touched thy wrist
And felt thy breath to hover like a dove,
Stainless and dear above my rapture's mist,
Stranger than simple lust, more strong than love,
I have been thine on dizzy heights that tire
And know thee well, white Angel of Desire.

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Nihil mea carmina.

LOVE, could you tell that when I sing to lull
You with my sweetest, sweetest, till you long
For sweetness sweeter, far beyond this dull
And slender voice you hear, I am a song?
O when I raise my lashes and uplift
My eyes to yours, mine shadowed like a lake,
My song may be my own, my own poor gift
To you; but I am music that you make,
A melody that thrills me at your touch,
Such harmony to me, but what to you?
The reed that quivers with your breath so much,
My singer say, what is the reed's right due?
One brief shrill song or two, one short soft spoken?
Will you remember when the reed is broken?

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To Narcissus.

THERE is a silent pool, I know the place,
And round it everywhere things downward grow,
Although Narcissus could not see his face
Bent to the water imageless and low,
To which no wind-blown sunlight brings relief,
That mirrors not its change through leaf and leaf.

The boy Narcissus to the water bent,
The soft impassive surface that can thrill
And dimple with his breath or hand that sent
A pebble or a broken daffodil,—
O fair Narcissus! has he understood
What pool this is and in what silent wood?

O boy Narcissus, could you break the spell,
Unsay the whispered words a god has said,
And part the boughs, and learn what spirits dwell,
Here when the sunlight found the baffled shade,
You might know whether May-ripples remember
The heaviest twig that fell in last September.

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Meadowsweet and Honeysuckle.

YOU have been love so often,
Your mouth so strange to feel
When curved to swerve and soften,
I must worship you and kneel.

Where the meadowsweet has seen us,
Honeysuckle sweet and fair,
Pleasures past of love between us
Live to tell us what we were.

Woodland leaves and voices shiver
When you are wooed to sing,
And old murmurs on the river
Ripple with the sighs you bring.

Like twin sea-birds above it
We know the salt sea-dew :
You have still somewhat of it,
It has something of you.

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To the place ever after,
  Perfume as strong as the sea's,
Memories cling of your laughter,
  And your laugh remembers these.

So long as our loves remember,
  I care not for time and am free.
Let loose the fears of September,
  The Spring is present to me.

Unmistakable resurrection
  Of desire undaunted and fair!
O perfect beyond perfection
  The worship of your hair!

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Love at First Sight.

I.

YOU say we never met before :
O timid lover false to me,
Have you forgotten? Love is more
Than faithful memory.

Did I not turn to you like this,
My lips forlorn, the lips you know?
Surely man never had a kiss
He has remembered so.

It haunted you like flower-soft air,
Set to the tune of discontent,
When mad syringa swoons to bear
The passion of its scent.

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Many a mouth it made more red
  Than crimson duller lips discern,
And to my longing it has led
  You speechless half and stern.

For you are weary who have sighed,
  For me so often, not in vain;
And I am pale and sick of pride,
  And love that worships pain.

Oh! life has gambled with us both,
  And we have won and we have lost,
And been deceived and broken troth
  And learnt what kisses cost.

But for a look of ours, a word,
  A silence dumb and vague and chilly,
A moment that your breath has stirred,
  And mine has answered stilly:

When has there been a single touch
  Some unforgotten that endures,
We had not given and ceased to clutch
  The best of mine and yours?

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And if we never spoke till now,
  (Although we surely must have met
And surely loved, somewhere, somehow,
  But lovers can forget!)

And if we never met before,
  It was, it must have been for this
I stood so near the garden door,
  With pictured clematis,

And trailing ivy-stems to frame
  In scattered leaves my solitude,
When lifting up my eyes you came—
  You came and understood.

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II.

Speak not to me nor say your name,
  But lift to mine your eyes unveiled ;
I need not ask you whence you came,
  So dear with passion unbeheld
  As I hold hands I often held.

Wherever and whenever met,
  O dreamt of love of long ago,
That no remembrance can forget,
  O look but once and I shall know
  You that one moment ere you go.

Then diverlike my soul shall find
  In yours depths coloured from your eyes,
Below desire's most endless wind
  That fails sometimes and never dies,
  But ever does to rapture rise.

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And in the mirror of your face
  Shall love be pictured quite alone;
And you and he like time and space,
  Twin symbols mystically shown,
  Shall rule my life to be your own.

O perfect fragmentary light
  That flashes from yourself to me,
Revealing, through that one delight,
  The tossings of the constant sea,
  Where time pursues eternity!

For when we meet, before we part,
  And lose each other as we must;
Between two beatings of the heart,
  What strange excess of life shall thrust
  The whole of ecstasy and lust?

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Foxglove.

"O WHAT is spring." My lover answered:
"Love:
Of love the grasses whispered what they knew;
Love in the cooing of the cooing dove."
And love? I asked. My lover answered: "You;
You hold his arrows and you shoot them well."
At which I laughed and showed my wounded hand,
And on we went and plucked a foxglove bell
For philtres, and the stem for magic wand;
We played and laughing called the other's name,
My fingers in my darling's safe and close:
And like the flaming of a lofty flame
At our love's incantation Love arose.
"O love, O Spring, O Love!" I laughed, I cried.
But Love was mute and stern, and blushed and sighed.

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Stramony.

SLENDER and strong, and like the foxglove tall,
Rosy to match its roadside loveliness ;
Like purple aconite from fierce Nepaul
Soft eyes aad underlids, these coloured less ;
Flesh of the peach, like peach flowers poisonous,
Fairer than both nor scentless like the last ;
And in those idle hands the black skins ooze
Of nightshade berries purple filled thou hast ;
O like the hemlock dropwort in the South,
But not so kind, for through thee none forgets :
O breath benumbing, O narcotic mouth !
Faint anodyne like scented violets ;
And like the foxglove, chill at first to me,
But wilder tasted than red stramony.

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Defiance.

O MAKE me thine before the longing dies,
That leaves me loverless and not thy friend,
Past this hour who shall such another send?
Before the gate be shut of paradise,
O let us walk there amorous and wise.
Remember we are love's, to bruise or bend:
And what thy words began let thy lips end,
I care not surely for the after sighs.

Stern and relentless be thy love to-day,
Harsher the pressure of thy hand on mine,
To-morrow judge us. We can wait, I say,
And at the verdict I shall not repine.
This mouth was made for love and meant for moans:
If that be guilty, why, much pain atones.

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Tuberose and Meadowsweet.

OF tuberose I sing, and meadowsweet :
One flower much whiter than the fervent
dove,
Whose scent in living pulses seems to beat :
Magnetic ardour, drowsy scent of love,
O memory, O presence odorous,
Thy life's perfume, my perfect tuberose !

O meadowsweet, my passion's purity,
O distant echo, faintness rapt and fresh,
That means my soul to thee, and thine to me,
O symbols flowersoft of soul and flesh,
My hands on my love's knees, at my love's feet,
Of tuberose I sing and meadowsweet.

I sing for one we love, my rhymes and I,
Who loves my song for me, me for my song,

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One whom we love we know well why,
My song and I.
O love do you love us for short, for long,
Me and my song?
Of meadowsweet I sing, of meadowsweet!

O mine, my meadowsweet,
O slender grace to me,
O fairness made to meet
With slimness loftily,
And white but rose-delighted,
And pink but pale-affrighted,
With gazing unreserved
On love's most steep abysses!
Spreading smiles many curved!
Soft dreamful skin and kisses,
O mouth not meant to speak
The riddle of thy cheek!
What can be whispered lower,
Hardly with words to-day,
(But flower-leaf touching flower)
O do not stir to say.
Silence, for silence knows best.
Be mute: the amorous best!

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Of meadowsweet I sing, of meadowsweet.
Slender and sweet, like honey, like thy hair,
O like my words to thee, like meadowsweet,
Stainless and tender, tall and fair,
Fair like thy hair,
Tender and sweet like grasses to thy feet,
Like meadowsweet,
Of meadowsweet I sing, of meadowsweet!

O flower, O love, most mystical and fresh,
Whose breath can thrill us with a breath most sweet,
As with the touch of warm seraphic flesh,
Of meadowsweet I sing, of meadowsweet!

Of tuberose, O love, of tuberose,
I sing of tuberose, of tuberose!
It may be summer in the woods to-day,
Or winter with the trees, or spring, who knows?
It may be pleasant on the new-mown hay
Or near the sea-rock where the wet wind goes,
And happy lovers find their kisses salt.
It may be summer in the woods to-day

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Or spring unfolding such a perfect rose
That it would not be fairer for a fault ;
If you have me, and I have you, then say
What should we do, who love with empty shows ?
It may be summer in the woods to-day,
Or winter with the trees, or spring, who knows ?
Of tuberose I sing, of tuberose !

Behind the soft green curtains half undone,
The fluttering paleness, is it morn or eve,
To-day that ends, to-morrow that's begun ?
While through the cream white muslin like a sieve,
Some precious light is shed like powdered amber
Between the soft green curtains half undone,
Enough of light to see you nor to grieve—
Glimpses and whispers outside of our chamber,
Inadequate beneath a useless sun,
What sight or sound can one of us receive ?
Behind the soft green curtains half undone
The fluttering paleness, is it morn or eve ?

Here in the vague and close confined room
All senses are as one acutely blent,
When speechless, touching not, in silent gloom

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We yearn and languish with a single scent,
Relentlessly and subtly odorous.
Here in the vague and close confined room
And of Lethean pleasures redolent,
The strong inevitable tuberose
Surrounds irradiating to a tomb,
Where half-unconciousness is well content.
Here in the vague and close confined room
All senses are as one acutely blent.

If this be death, then we are dead indeed!
O do not stir lest we find life again:
What should we have of life? There is no need
For us to fill the hollow hours in vain
Or lengthen out the sobbing of our breath.
If this be death, then we are dead indeed,
Or waiting for the whole of life to wane,
After the last sigh, love, the first kiss, death!
I think that on some battlefield we bleed,
And I would live once more to be so slain.
If this be death, then we are dead indeed.
O do not stir lest we find life again!

Of tuberose I sing, of tuberose!
O love, O flower, whose name I may not tell

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Save unto one alone who is not here,
But who perhaps like me remembers well
One flower, one scent, one hour and one called dear.
For this perfume since then a grave profound,
Wherein is laid of life the perfect whole,
Has undivided from desire been wound
About the inmost longings of my soul.
And when I sicken of my living now
This wizard flower brings back again thy breath,
Touches my mouth and hands : how far art thou ?
For I do feel thee like delight or death,
Thy shoulders and thy arms, thy shadowed hair,
Thy speechless lips and thy unaltered stare.
Of tuberose, desirous tuberose,
I sing of tuberose, of tuberose,
Of tuberose I sing and meadowsweet.

Too much has my desire been heard to moan
Within the narrow cavity of rhyme,
And made poor music in a place of stone,
For loved henceforth or unbeloved, time
No longer may deny for all his wrong,
One worth worth my rapture, rapture worth my song.

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And if my kisses have been strangely red
You must ask meadowsweet and tuberose,
Or pale like them and mutely sung instead;
If each flower cannot tell, at least each knows,
And either scent remembers, white and strong,
One worth my kisses, kisses worth my song.

Give me thy voice, thy breath, thy lids, thy presence,
Thy arm, thy neck, and much too sweet, thy breast;
And bruise my life until thou find its essence,
Love's deepest poppy for my soul's dear guest.
Let them be crushed beneath thy darling feet,
Darling, my tuberose and meadowsweet!

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Two Moods.

I HAD a mood of sorrow,
  Such ecstasy was in it,
Never can any morrow
  Forget it quite or win it.

I had a mood of pleasure,
  Such sorrow was born of it,
That neither work nor leisure
  Is joy to me or profit.

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A Song of Waiting.

HAVE you never waited,
Never felt what waiting meant,
How slow the seconds since love went,
With what sorrow weighted :
How sad the minutes, slow belated
Of which the last brings back again
The old renewal of your pain,
Grievous love, silence unabated.

Have you never waited,
Wept more than tears could show,
Have you never hated,
Never shuddered with blank woe,
O then you cannot know
My love, my love !

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Have you never waited,
Felt what waiting signified,
The tender sigh, the laughter's pride,
With what sorrow weighed;
How slow the hours too harshly mated
That wail and bring but back again
The new persistence of your pain,
Love colourless, grief unabated?

Have you never waited,
Wept more than tears could show,
Have you never hated,
Never shuddered with blank woe?
O then you cannot know
My love, my love!

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Sad September.

THE fields have not one daisy
  And the new-mown hay is wet,
The sun seems far and hazy,
  And the new-mown hay is wet.

My grief is more than the grasses
  Can cover as they grow,
And the silver wing that passes
  Flies seaward like my woe :

Where passion is and is not,
  Where beauty is not keen,
Where lovers touch and kiss not,
  Where I have never been !

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In thy kingdom, Sad September,
  Such things can never be ours,
And men must live and remember
  There's an end to the curse of the hours.

Till the end what despair before us,
  What wretched trials of mirth,
What hatred of one who bore us,
  The old insensible earth!

And perhaps when comes death to deliver
  From life's unavoidable bond,
The weak body will shudder and shiver
  And pray for a petty beyond.

In thy kingdom, Sad September,
  They will bind thee, foot and hand,
And the archers of December
  Be too many to withstand.

The fields have not one daisy
  And the new-mown hay is wet,
The sun seems far and hazy,
  I do not hope to forget.

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Mal d'Amour.

I.

IF I could make this minute last
Until thy kisses come again,
With slumberous eyes and eyelids fast
I would not mourn in vain.

Alas! alas! I cannot slake
My weary thirsting for my sweet.
Ah! love, to sleep, or love to wake,
Nor long to hear thy feet!

Between thy lips a rosebud's stalk:
O backward swinging of the gate,
Thy footsteps on the gravel walk,
Thy whispered "Am I late?"

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Too late! For when thou, dear, arrivest,
Thou wilt not find me as thou left,
Unless with thy breath thou revivest
My sad mouth red-bereft.

I sigh to thee my long farewell,
For if thy kisses come not soon,
I may not live, I know it well;
I shall not live till noon.

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II.

Only to feel right over me the wind to pass,
The same that slakes the reeds and makes them cool,
O you who love me lay me where the chill we grass
Was never mown around the pool.

For if you do not I shall never sleep again,
Not though I die, not though I sigh till night,
All day upon my bed, and with my eyelid's stain
Coloured like dusky aconite.

Rigid and strange to touch when love would call me death,
Can death be wholly rest to my unholy life?
Or must the last least mournful aching of my breath
Mean death for life but strife for strife?

Since death may have no mercy as my life had none,
I will not turn to it nor yearn until,
After the setting of the useless summer sun,
I know my darling's royal will.

Google

Ah! leave me near the damp green edge alone to
think,
With glad eyelids the warm sun bids me close,
Through which the blood seems lovely seen so
clearly pink,
Ah! leave me where the bulrush grows.

And I will grasp the grasses cold to both my
hands,
And as I press them may I less be full
Of that dry heat that chokes me as with hot dry
sands,
Their former seas no longer cool.

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A Prayer.

LET thy kisses overbrim,
Many more than he can tell,
Till they reach the soul of him
Who loves so well.

Therefore be thy mouth from his
Unwithdrawn while strength thou hast
For another such a kiss
Unlike the last.

When thy weary mouth refuses
Single pleasures to his soul,
Listen then to him who chooses
One rapture's whole.

Once in every fluttered kiss
Passion separate abided,
Greater now the closer bliss,
Bliss undivided !

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To One Asleep.

O SHALL I lift the rose leaves
That sleep has laid across
Each eye of thine?
O such the wind that blows, leaves
Behind upon the moss
Without a sense of loss
To the eglantine!
But at thy waking, dearest,
That love may stand beside thee,
Tell me the thing thou fearest
That in my arms I hide thee.

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Crane's Bill.

THY crane's bill red is dearer on thy mouth
Than scarlet berries grown of other lips;
My breath is like the swallow, thine the South;
More than my strength fails at thy finger tips.
Thy lashes curving heavenward have sent
My life that trembled when thy looks were far;
Thy nearness ever could revive like scent,
And make the world a dwindling of a star.
Though beauty wholly seem to me confined
In thy strong limbs and face, as in a lake
All heaven's blue can sapphire shelter find,
I do not love thee only for thy sake;
But for love's too and sorrow's sake I love,
And all that deep disgust I'm master of.

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A Lover's Apology.

I.

WHEN I call Hyacinth or Helen fair,
And Paris-like I love, or like Apollo,
O do not think me false, or my words hollow;
O do not scorn for this my constant care.
For I must climb each step of Beauty's stair,
And Hyacinth or Jason I must follow,
Must southward hurry like the fleetest swallow,
Bearing with me thy kisses everywhere.

So let me linger where my eager will
Has caught the tremor of a scarlet mouth
Men once had worshipped in the mystic south;
Know me most faithful, know me loving still,
Though now more fiercely, now more fondly tame,
The beauty that thy lips and hair proclaim.

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II.

Be crueller than cold. The winter's time
In spring recall. Be harsh, O soft unkindness.
Curl, happy lashes. Love, know this my crime
Was not less monstrous than a moment's blindness.

For looks I squandered that have slighted thee,
And guilty gaze to careless glance succeeding,
Another's grace forgiveness cannot be,
Nor one mad minute grant a dismal pleading.

Most false with open eyes, most like to him
I was who sunlight sees and starlight after,
And for the paler wrongs his former hymn,
My startled sense deserves thy dazzling laughter.

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Hybiscus.

HOW shall I sing thy song of jubilation,
How raise the music of my verse like flame
And stain it right through like a clove carnation
With scent and colour, with a sweet bright name?
Hear not the singer when his song is strongest,
Remember only that for which thou longest!

For what am I who sing for thee to listen?
O listen to thyself, not to my voice,
Let thy own soul be fervent, thine eyes glisten,
Hear me, and do not hear me, O rejoice,
O be not sadder, thou whose locks are yellow
Than young Apollo with the sun for fellow!

O let the rain of tears be slow and chilly,
And bitter to thy mouth the sea-blown salt:
Hast thou not touched like few great love's white
lily,

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Exotic flower which thou dost still exalt,
  In that songland of old where Love's elect are,
  Whose living essence is undying nectar.

Where they have been, and are, and walk together,
With dear hybiscus crowned, or meadowsweet,
Singers and sung in rapt meridian weather;
Wild hyacinths they crush beneath their feet.
  And in that garden's paradisal medley
  Sad aconite and nightshade are not deadly.

Thy lips have tasted, and the scent thou knowest:
Thy eyes remember nor thy hands forget
That to fair time time's memory thou owest;
O fleshly eloquence that speaks well yet!
  O like an island of remotest Ocean
  Must be thy visions of untold emotion!

O safe, secure, for no man's profanation,
Let all the waves be witnesses of love,
And let me sing thy song of jubilation
In softer breathings than the cooing dove,
  And murmur unto thee and for thee only
  A melody of hours in these more lonely.

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Flower of the Sea.

TO ONE WHOSE FRIEND DIED AT SEA.

I DO not grudge whatever joy thou hast,
For pride or pleasure or a kiss rose-red,
What man but sees their shadow on the past,
What boy has not had whom a dream has led?
But thy fair sorrow, like some antique verse,
Or far scent bruised beneath unstained fingers,
To one who sickens of his songs perverse
Is pain, is pain, a stubborn pain that lingers.
In search of love and beauty men have striven,
And lost the strength of worship at their knees,
But to have found them both unsought and given
Such priceless idols only to the seas,
Sweeter than glad hybiscus in the heat
The falling of thy tears must have been sweet.

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Flower of Death.

O WEARY traveller from death to me,
With cruel eyes, with mute and sighing breath,
O backward gazing for Eurydice!
Am I not lifelong love to thee, and death?
Remember mine: was thine a mouth more earnest,
Or more thine own the limbs thou couldst not save?
Take this instead of that for which thou yearnest,
My breast not less lethean than the grave.
Upon this gentle pillow dying slowly,
Heartbeat by heartbeat life is less in us,
Till that remaining be transmuted wholly,
So peaceful, sad and strangely amorous,
That all my kisses skilfully must strive
Thy soul undeviating to revive.

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Flower of the Past.

WHERE is the shore on which thy kisses died,
When love was wind to blow them to the beach,
The golden sand that drank in each by each,
Whose every grain seemed glistening golden-eyed?
And one was standing, shoulder, throat and side
Marble-bare for the fairest foam to reach,
While on the mouth soft-scattered at a speech,
The flowers of foam were ebbing like the tide!

O wind that shakes with desperate desire,
A voice that falters on the sea to-night,
With darkness for a sail, far out to sea,
O take us with thee, wind, to pilot thee!
For love has led us where the waves expire
Around the island named of us Delight.

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On the Borderland of Sin.

HERE in these love-surrounded solitudes
I make of sleep a place to watch you in,
While silence through close carven branches thin
With moonlit footsteps creeps in fancied woods ;
And stealthy pink thorn over us excludes
The sky from nearer kissing of your skin,
From any breezes vocal with faint sin
My lordship of your cold unconscious moods.

Unseen, untouched, beneath a dreamt-of bliss,
I dare not stir the blossom of a kiss :
For at the first disturbing of the air
Would not the pink thorn petals, round and sweet,
Like many flakes of blood on limbs and hair,
Flutter and quiver to your weary feet ?

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Flower of Love.

TO ——.

BECAUSE our love is not of common growth,
Nor faulty, if at all, with simple flaws,
Such as our fancies long since learned to loathe
In wayward following of subtler laws ;
Steadily straying through romantic moods
With hours that do not kiss the sunlight's feet,
Because we sing where loneliness secludes
The sighing moonlit space for us to meet,
Nor turn to part until the bitter east
Our sad and crowded wilderness disclose,
They call that sickly which perfumes at least
Our mystic moments : not unlike the rose
The foreign orchid flutters when 'tis stirred.
Enough ! Enough ! Too much the world has
heard.

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Syringa.

O LOVE, that face I saw was surely thine !
As roseleaf is to roseleaf, skin and skin :
Thy mouth—but paler far, love's eglantine :
O love, thy vivid face, this sad and thin !
And even thy hair had grown mysterious
Beneath the many flowers upon it laid,
A burden of frail white flowers odorous
Whose heavy petals fell and did not fade.
And from the shoulder hardly to the knee
Thy garment coloured like syringa leaves
Hung in such small straight folds as seemed to be
The wrinkles in dry green that summer weaves.
Love ! in thy hand the flower I gave was yet
Pure gold in white : my tears had kept it wet.

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Edelweiss.

BENEATH thy lids the stars have died away :
Thy lashes cloud for me the moonlit air
And sunlight rules the shadows of thy hair.
Thy skin is powdered with the gold of May,
Mine, flushed with rosiness that will not stay
Unless thy smile dispel all vulgar care,
And dimples shame those curling leaves that were
The pride and meaning of a fragrant day.

Soft flower of love that blooms but where the ice is
How can I reach to where the edelweiss is?
How can I love a lily's pale device,
Or that poor ghost by modern men called duty,
When thy delicious words, thy more than beauty
Have woven spells that restlessly entice?

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At a Private View.

O MANY curls, loose ashes of thy hair!
I wonder in what sunless manner thou
And with how much reiterated care
Hast bleached the scattered gold above thy brow.
Strange mouth whose scarlet flake is like a stain
Upon the not unpainted pallid skin,
Close lips about to suck the juice of pain!
Already works the discontented chin.
The eyelids mute are lowered till they speak
With silent lashes spelling half some trouble:
For why this cold and unresponsive cheek
Save as the ice beneath which secrets bubble,
And reach dull eyes and lips to overbrim
In passionless obscurity more dim.

Royal Academy, 1884.

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Self-betrayed.

BY this I know the beating of my heart
A tuneless tumult to thy blood unswayed:
To love no traitor, false to me thou art.
Thy love is herald, O thou hast betrayed!
Since I have learnt thy riddle kiss by kiss,
Soft breath by breath, and when my brain was ice,
There seems a meaning which I cannot miss
In thy caresses' classical device.
Poor sleeping Sphinx! whose secret if I told
What waking for that head in slumber bowed?
By this a rival's gain I could behold
That when my love was on thee like a shroud
No shrinking from accustomed raptures came,
No rose-blush import of a new-born shame.

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Farewell.

I.

TO A POET.

MY mouth is loveless for your sake,
My words are falser than you fear,
And I am chilly like a lake
Where sleeping love may drift and wake
And shiver all the year.

Dumb at the whisper of a kiss
For love your song begins to fail;
Mute at the murmuring of this
Your heart more full than singing is
Though longing and a wail!

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O such a lover you! And I
  Am false and treacherous, untrue,
And all such lovers say! And why?
Because I answer ecstasy
  Like yours: "Was love its due?"

Was love the payment you require,
  And love the gift for me to hang
Around your hair, about your lyre,
And see it played with till you tire
  Of what you loved and sang?

Or else be worshipped evermore,
  The weary idol of a poet,
The garden wherein he finds store
Of each sweet-smelling metaphor,
  Till inspiration knew it

And habit wandered in its place,
  And I became a song's excuse,
So many lines upon my face,
Such perfect sonnets by the brace,
  A very modern muse!

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And so with books of lyrics round me,
  Small volumes misty more and more—
No longer free : your fame had bound me
And made those others love who found me,
  Because you loved before !

"But if he loves," I hear them say,
  These happy judges in a crowd,
"And set the passionate wind of May
To shake the hawthorn on your way,
  And leave it star-endowed !

"If with the clinging pink thorn wet
  With tears, half scattered in the rain,
His head is crowned, must you forget
That yours has scent upon it set
  And gold as rare again ?

"Your curls have passion's phosphorescence,
  Their less than beauty were too brief
If unrelieved flaxen adolescence
Had not been dipped in dyes whose essence
  Is of another's grief !"

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I say one word that would be true
  If players at love could get believed :
Who was the falser, I or you,
The one who kissed, the one who knew,
  Deceiver or deceived ?

You may have loved me very well,
  But what of love that will not tread
Where truth not vision cares to dwell ?
Now I have spoken, now farewell :
  And all is done and said.

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II.

TO A LOVER.

YOUR love was not the love for me,—
An alien, mine, to strange desires !
But yours was stormy like a sea
That ever tires.

Mine fugitive, a sea-spread hue !
When in your eyes dumb passion set
And mine but coldly gazed, I knew
Your lashes wet.

M y satisfaction was your moan,
Your pleasure weary, and your laugh ;
You never called me quite your own
Save shuddering half.

They might have not been over now,
Kisses, and curses, and your love,
At last had I you know well how
Not said : Enough

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III.

I THOUGHT that love's last speech
With passion had been spoken,
And all the magic broken
That linked us each to each,
The secrets kisses teach
With pleasure for a token
And rapture for a spell :
came to say farewell.

For it was lost we knew
The love we once had granted
When each the other's wanted
To perfect things anew
And worship "I" in "You";
And on the heart that panted
In bygone ecstasy
I came to say good-bye.

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When in the room I stood
And parting was not bitter,
A bird began to twitter,
(I think it understood)
And outside in the wood
The very leaves to titter
At those that weave a spell
And think to say farewell.

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IV.

IF strength of kisses could be broken
And latter beatings of the heart
Not re-echo the words once spoken,
Then it were well for us to part
If we could part.

If souls remembered not the kiss
Of lips beyond the touch and start,
Meeting or parting were not this,
Then it were well for us to part
If we could part.

Digitized by Google

V.

CONVOLVULUS.

O DO not use those blushes altered thus.
It is not paradise this summer air
And we are not where once indeed we were.
This marble palace was not built for us
When slowly we through meadows odorous
Have walked nor made them by one flower less
fair.
Untwine, untangle, from your scented hair
The ivy-leaf and vain convolvulus.

Why are we here to-day? O hide your shame,
Mine shall be silent too. This hour betrays,
Calling our old self up to meet the new.
The mouth that answers mine is not the same
My songs were made for in the tuneful days
When love was you to me and I to you.

Digitized by Google

VI.

THE world is empty of all love but his
Who called thee love and felt beneath his own
Thy breath half flutter to a sleepy kiss
And languor load thy limbs with yielding stone.
Surely his mouth and hands and all of him
Have squeezed love's passion to the very dregs
And drunk the bitter when the sweet grew dim :
Now beggared beauty comes to thee and begs.
For in thy dainty self beloved of May
Who rifled for thy sake all vernal things,
His eager love has gathered sweetness day
By day and left it worthless as dead Spring's:
So beauty finds in thee all beauty lost
Who knew thee once so fair to beauty's cost.

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VII.

NENUPHAR.

LOVE? . . . You love me then? . . .
Not one
Word more!—All be silent now.
Ends achieved, what's left undone?
With the fairest apple gone
Should one flutter still the bough?
Silence, since the end has won.
After soaring ever higher
Earth is not the place, my Singer!
Song of lips and loud desire
Hardly kiss and fondly tire,
Better, wiser, not to linger.
Snap the strings and leave the lyre.
Shatter sweetness, not in vain:
Rapture lives on broken scent;
Bruise what roses yet remain,
Scatter them along the lane.
Else you read the red intent:
Hands that gather thorns may stain.

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Stay! You think me angry? No.
Nor disdainful, nor amused,
Nor yet staggered by a blow
I unriddled long ago
When my sleepless fancy mused.
Say again and say it so.
Let me listen while you say,
"Love me, love, I love, I love."
Like the master of the day,
Strong as sunlight. Yes, this way:
"Love, I love, I love." Enough.
This hour ripens to decay.
Leafage of the present air,
Flowers! They wither in my sight,
Bloom from blossom dropping there,
Leaf from bud as things that were.
Vultures beat about delight
Wide on wings of future care,
See them hover in a cloud
Round the lips that once have kissed!
Feel them hurry in a crowd
To the prey by fate allowed,
Not one morsel to be missed.

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Love stands somewhere, pale and cowed,
Drive the terror from my eyes !
Speak again, O Lord of Love,
Teach me, beautiful and wise,
With thy breath that sadly flies
From the lips that sweetly move.
Make me happy with thy sighs.
Hands apart and scheme from scheme,
Scarcely touching, yours and mine,
Shall we float along a dream,
Shall we follow on the stream
Which the water-lilies line,
Seeing but the things that seem ?
While the lulling musical
Midday murmurs ripple slowly,
Lulling voices should they call
Quite away, the city wall
Surely must have vanished wholly,
Gardens, palace-roof and all.
So of old the tale began
Of one floating on the stream,
Crowned with nenuphar and wan
As the thoughts within her ran
From the real to the dream,

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From the eagle to the swan . . .
You, the stainless love of years,
Loved unseen and recognized
By the beauty that endears
Soul to flesh like mutual spheres,
Loved unknown and known and prized,
You the emblem of my tears !
Go ! Your mouth my life obscures.
Love's betrayal in a kiss,
Love, your smile's caress allures :
Leave me now and love endures,
Brands my soul with yours ! That is
Why my mouth must shrink from yours.

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VIII.

MY love, my foe,
Between us it so,
That love's beginning must have meant like this
To end? And yet your skill I know
Was not the match for mine! That early kiss
I struggled for becomes an after-blow.
While doling out my bliss
You smiled and watched and waited
Till you had bound with long delight you hated
Me, love-intoxicated.

There is a game
By men called love or shame
Where two must play yet both or one can win
Through merest chance the right to claim
The keys of paradise and enter in:
We smiled, my love and I, until it came
To this that I begin
To reckon up the cost,
For pence my gold and silver lost and tossed:
I find I've played and lost.

Digitized by Google

IX.

TO ROSY.

O LOVES that wound with blunt desire!
Worn all a careless day and broken,
Why fling the flower, unwind the wire
And keep it for a last love's token?

Is not the last of love and lust
To those who walked on wind-blown passion,
A twisted wire, with bloodlike rust,
A deep remembered lost carnation?

Around the frail and iron thread
The flaming storm was poor and powerless,
While save for single petals dead
And strangely changed, it left us flowerless.

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With tears and time bespattered bliss !
  O mouth where we have been too often !
O scattered pollen of a kiss
  Pale on the lips that used to soften !

O breath, O balsam faintly stirred,
  O scented whispered words and mercies,
Love-set to some love-tune unheard,
  O music made of moans and curses !

But I can think of you, my dear,
  And dream beneath the selfsame cluster
Of leaves and flowers you liked last year,
  Nor missfor sighs the joyous lustre.

For me the fond laburnum bends,
  The lovely pinkthorn flushes clearly,
Though never lovers, never friends,
  We never surely wandered nearly !

No burden weighs the branches down,
  No thrill new senses can recapture
Lays on them—self-endowed—a crown
  Or lifts their gold to higher rapture.

Digitized by Google

Their simple fairness as before
  Answers to what you were, my beauty,
Not any less, not any more,
  Dear one to whom I owed no duty.

Laburnum-like and soft your hair,
  Curled yellow : but a scentless posy !
The hawthorn's shame your face can share,
  Unaltered, paltry, pure and rosy.

Nor have I crumpled, burst and torn
  Your blossoms rage-intoxicated,
Nor worshipped with my tears and scorn
  What loving most I most have hated.

We safely left delight untried :
  We met, nor was our parting treason,
Nor did we stake our pain and pride,
  But seemed to flirt for half a season.

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X.

FADED MEADOWSWEET.

THE rain had put much colour in the grass,
Pink here and there and yellow where it dried,
With specks of copper, iron-rust and brass,
And only green where fuller drenched and wide,
The stout and dripping lady-ferns thick set
Seemed painted in but lately and still wet.

The fair slim meadowsweet your fingers twirled,
Why had I given it you to hold, I wondered;
For since I plucked it we had crossed a world,
So many stiles, and fields by hedges sundered,
And pools whose meadowsweet made slow our walk;
But yours was whiter with a redder stalk.

And when quite tired of the holding it
Spoilt with the warmth and pressure of your glove,
Between the teeth that champed it like a bit
The flower hung, not yet bitten through, O love,
Your lips were near, I should have thought of them,
Though white your meadowsweet and red the stem.

* * * * *

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Soft strong air like dear kisses but less harsh,
Summer all sweetness when the touch is over,
Grasses and reeds on meadow land and marsh,
Hemlock and sorrel, meadowsweet and clover!
  Your hand but half in mine, by no one seen,
  Why did you pause to listen on the green?

O by the shallow river was our way,
Our turning to the left where water slowly
Crept, and this shadow on your face all day
Perhaps had never been, nor you less holy—
  Your arm against my shoulder, just so much,
  Just there, no need for fingers then to clutch.

But no, you moved aside and all went wrong,
I, you, my love, your beauty, out of focus!
Yet only for a minute, for a song,
A merry voice or two we heard that woke us,
  (For we could hardly see, some trees between)
  Your hand still half in mine, upon the green.

* * * * *

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Red mouth of love, give us one touch again!
I would no longer sip the country air.
Once more renew the wonted hope and pain,—
What blunt already, when you still are fair?
  Sprinkle against this dull encroaching breeze
  One more perfume of love, strange memories!

Sweet English sweetness, manifold and free,
O many scents and changes odorous
And surely from your own detractory,
Else Summer's mouth were not injurious
  To your lips' breath, not wind-blown from the West,
  And your most warm, most uninquiring breast!

Ah! yet the mouth of love and answering flesh,
The voice responsive to my voice so long,
Should sweeter scented be than all these fresh
Unconscious kisses that can do no wrong!
  O vain caresses, breath I would resist!
  Can love's mouth then have been too often kissed?

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Flower of the Nettle.

IF love be newly christened
  As once you laughed and said,
And for love's name I listened
  But kissed you soon instead,
You laughed and, love, I waited
Upon your mouth belated
With love intoxicated.

Flower of the nettle, O,
  Alas it is not folly,
The name of love I know,
  Red berry of the holly!

If love's old name be missing,
  O call it not again
Delight or beauteous kissing
  Or anything but pain.

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O passion's most bewitching,
For this I thank your teaching,
Your gift to my beseeching.

Red berry of the holly,
The name of love I know,
Alas it is not folly :
Flower of the nettle, O !

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Hand in Hand.

I.

BETWEEN your careless fingers flushed and strong.
The flowers I gave are dropping one by one,
And on my mouth my sighs have checked my song
And tearful lashes cloud your face unwon.
O let me hold that bruised and worthless thyme, love,
But first O let me lightly touch your fingers
And learn that love is bitter one last time, love,
While passion sighs and lingers
And seems to you and me the only rhyme, love,
For the last time, love !

Now we are near as hands can be and words ;
Your breath is not your own, but grants to me
The living thrill as of a hundred swords.
My martyr-soul is torn with ecstasy.

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O let it bleed beneath this rapture's clime, love,
Beyond the dream's desire, beyond the singer's,
And learn how dear is sorrow one last time, love,
While passion sighs and lingers
And seems to you and me the only rhyme, love.
For the last time, love,

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II.

SOMETIMES you startle me as would a ghost,
So sudden, mute, and strangely understood,
And this when you are fervently and most
Mine own, the cause and sharer of my mood.
Is it the rigid mirror of your eyes
Holding an image alien to delight?
O no! For their still ice untouched lies,
A moonless answer to unflinching light.
Nor does the happy mouth, an open flower,
The upper lip love-lifted to some laughter,
Thrill with its tremor an unusual hour,
The first of many earlier known and after:
Is it that love between us is at fault,
Desirous worship that does not exalt?

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III.

WHEN on my face there falls thy smiling stare,
I do not care for beauty or for love,
Though one beneath, the other much above
Thy creamy skin with flower-soft lingering hair
And dimpling curves, my song's, my love's despair!
Thy heavy lids unruffled as a dove
Queen Helen's self would quite unworthy prove,
Make me pass on and say: I do not care.

What cause to care? So long as love and thou
Stand side by side with everlasting glow
Of laurel leaf and berry from one bough
Which beauty gathered for thy fairer brow,
Both thou and I, dear hand in hand, must go,
Nor lose each other in the storm of woe.

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IV.

O MOST when most a votarist to thee
Has self of worship made his minister.
When love would claim thy laugh's enamoured stir
And call it herald of all ecstasy,
O why did beauty bid me not to see,
Deep burying behind those curls that blur,
In passion like a living sepulchre
The meanings of my soul's idolatry!

With worship for a far delicious token
Set on the brows of passion for a sign,
With love I thought the barrier might be broken,
With beauty's help between my soul and thine,
But they were powerless, vain the fondest touch!
And hate alone was strong to do this much.

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Mimosa.

MY last year's gifts blown over
New seasons shall indeed discover
Petals again and passions at their prime,
Gardens that re-echo my fondest rhyme,
Yellow mimosa made of gold so thin
It falls like dust yet lingers like a lover,
Rosy carnations chosen to match thy skin,
Fragrance which orchids unexpected bear,
Creamy beneath soft leaves of maidenhair,
Some rosebud near thy chin.

And when from all the bees
Have fed in honey-gathering ease,
When the new seasons have new snow to cover
Old gifts and graces of the year well over,
Yellow mimosa made of gold so thin
Shall fall like dust yet linger when all these
Paltry carnations chosen to match thy skin
Wither and shrivel in the gas and glare,
Undone and scorched beneath the London air,
Nor hint what love could win.

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Flower of the Wind.

I.

O LOVE, whose lips and lashes
The amorous rain has fretted,
Leaving a kiss that flashes
On every lash he wetted,
And on thy mouth disdaining
The promise of his passion,
The lovely bruises staining
It like some pale carnation !
O love, my weary wind flower,
Thy leaves are falling slowly,
But never mayst thou find flower
So fair to me and holy,
O loved anemone,
O love, the love for me.

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II.

O silent eyes whose hollow
Is darker than the Ocean,
O tell me where to follow
And seek your true emotion,
For I would die to capture
Its faintest phosphorescence
Lighting my spirit-rapture
That rises and that lessens
As meaning in them quickens,
Or as the lashes flutter
With a soft droop that sickens
Like love-curses lips utter,
  O mute anemone,
  O love, what love for me?

Grosvenor Gallery, 1884.

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Love in a Mist.

O SADDEST and most mournful passionist
Turning to some discoloured scentless space
Thy weary eyes, the pallor of thy face
Beneath thy scattered slender curls unkissed :
O bound and crowned with ghostlike amethyst
Through whose frail veins the sapphire blood we trace,
Pale Hamadryad, Soul of love's disgrace,
O longing desolate, Love in a mist !

Love in a mist ! Sweet shadow of my love,
Thou art I know the flower of love to me ;
O misty blue, reflex of that above,
Soft eyes contemplative do you not see
Where passion is the same as ecstasy,
Though pleasure flutter far, uncaught, a dove ?

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Clematis.

SOMETIMES I wish to pluck pale clematis
Whereon the nightlong wind has swept in vain,
And seek if sorrow answer not my pain:
For if the lips of grief are kind to kiss,
Then gladly, dearest, shall I drench like this
The heavy-bosomed careless rose with rain,
And shake the tears that leave or wipe a stain
In many dewdrops round the brows of bliss.

If happiness be starlike in love's sky,
A flower unreached and scented over-high,
Is it not better this desirous white
Though wan and poor and votary to scorn,
Than roseleaf gaudiness much less forlorn
With all its blank inadequate delight?

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Adonis.

WHO is king of faithless vows,
Who the master of mischance?
One who dwells in beauty's house,
One whose guilt is in his glance,
For his looks say: "Love me, Love!"
But his looks his deeds disprove.

Who is falser than he's fair,
Who is fairer than the truest?
One whose face is beauty's lair,
Tiger-cruel if thou knewest!
For his looks say: "Love me, Love!"
But his deeds his looks disprove.

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To Mrs. L.

I.

THIS Lady's beauty would not smile or wake
Though Longing held her hand, and their eyes met
During the slow capricious minuet,
But seemed the flush and ripple that you shake
With oleanders in a mountain lake,
So fair the boy Narcissus might forget
Why tears had made his tender lashes wet,
Nor gaze into the water for his sake.

What need for perfect beauty to be wooed
From this impassive uninquiring mood:
A mirror all of gold that flashes gold
Again: or dark Wastwater strangely seen
Under the stars of darkness, like a cold
Unfathomable smooth aventurine?

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II.

If there should fall a roseleaf full of rain
Before the sleeping roses felt their loss,
Pink, white or yellow, but without a stain,
Should you not lift this roseleaf from the moss?
And you might wonder, you would never know
The likeness of the rose wherefrom it fell,
Whether wild eglantine, hung high or low,
Or some slim garden-bud, you could not tell:
Or take a handful, roseleaves all most fair
Where is the rose that you can weave with these?
Not so this Lady's beauty and her hair,
For lonely, in a single sigh, one sees
  Her like the great triumphant rose alone,
  A rose of many leaves and moods windblown.

Edinburgh, September, 1884.

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Ivy Leaves.

TO ——.

HE asked his weary fancies
  Why they were silent now
And led no more their dances
  Beneath the hawthorn bough.

"O rhyme with rhyme for lover,
  Enamoured each of each,
Whence this new silence over
  The pleasure of your speech,

"Has sickness come to beauty,
  Say, are you growing old?
Forgotten is your duty
  When song is slowly doled."

O no! they said and pleaded
  Not loveliness at fault,
But precious words much needed
  One lady to exalt.

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"For where save in her chamber
Can we discover aught
Like faintly ruffled amber
That curls without a blot?

"Such hair with leaves upon it,
Green ivy on soft gold!
O when was there a sonnet
Where such things might be told?"

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To Mrs. ——.

I.

LIKE Summer listening in flowering time,
Herself in violet, to rose-clad June,
For Spring's last violet to rhyme and chime
With the rose coloured stronger scented tune,
The song of June!
Soft, rhythmical, in what unclouded clime
Wherein all hours have melody and rhyme,
Can my words at their softest learn the tune,
The song of June!

In silence like the pauses of the sea,
Foamlike among the eddies of your hair
The lamplight scatters, circling duskily
Save where it ripples on what must be fair,
Your precious hair!

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Like painting, splendid, perfect, shadowy:
As near the darkened seashore there may be
A prize of amber, shines obscured and fair
Your precious hair!

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II.

WITH clear bright hair, in mute and sunlit mood,
You sit and listen. Drooping in a jar
Lilies at your feet. Things half understood
The strange soft orchids kiss, pink star to star :
And voices hushed are framing music's hour
That falls and flames and flickers thrillingly ;
In a long fair gown tender like a flower
And dreamy as a wan and foamlit sea,
With quiet eyelids and with high repose,
Your steadfast look the mind's remembrance knows.

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Zelmane.

SHE is queen as she was, and I know her to be.
She was queen and she is. Do men know
when they greet her,
And great pride is to her like the foam to the sea,
How a Huntress in war, and like Dian, but fleeter,
Her sunflecked hair was bright like bright
aventurine,
In the distance of dreams, amazonian, a queen.

In the woodland of song, on the seashore of morn,
She has sung and been heard. There is none but
now winces
When her arrows are tipped with the steel of her
scorn,
And her armour is wit, and her laughter convinces,
She is slender, and smiles what her eyes have
not told.
She is cruel and tall: could Pyrocles behold!

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Sidney's prose and his verse prince Pyrocles proclaim,
And all lovers and friends and all knights owe him duty :
Had he seen he had not made a shield of her name,
Though his love was like song and like singing his beauty.
For alone and herself and so far from them all,
She is slender and smiles, she is slender and tall.

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Penthesilea.

IF I could dream myself that shepherd lad
Whose waking once beheld the visioned Three,
Like sisters of a bitter unity,
And with the apple happy Paris had
To make their lips and lashes eager-mad,
Beneath straight branches of one flowering tree,
How would my fancy most rejoice to see
Your amazonian slimness crowned and clad?

Fair Cypris has love's arrow in her palm;
Great Juno's peacock spreads a tarnished pride,
And Iris raises high her broken bow,
While frozen tears are cut for Wisdom's calm
To set on brows where gold and dusk have died:
But be yourself and Troy your rule shall know.

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Pelargonium.

I.

MY love has been a flower's idolatry,
And I can tell the tangled clematis
How tastes the honeysuckle's kiss :
Too often for some brief anemone
Beauty's reviler pleasure made of me :
When weary for some wild exotic bliss
The orchid have I blessed and wholly his
Has languished half my eager litany.

Spheral with frequent loss, O guelder rose,
My soul is strewn with thee like melted snows !
In clove carnations rapture lingered much,
But now even eglantine must leave me numb
Nor scatter blushes at my earnest touch,
Made happy once with pelargonium !

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II.

Can souls remember and the lips be dumb
When yesterday is followed where he went
Along the paths of present discontent?
For in my ears the moment's insect hum
Avails not nor can take from memory's sum
Delight's faint pleasure fugitively lent,
Remembering inextricable scent,
A poppied hour's pink pelargonium.

Your smiles were twining minutes to a wreath
As if to chain the distant vocal hour
With some harmonious far-off perfume:
You bound with mighty hands the half red bloom
Around my dreams for ever while they breathe
The crimson thrilling bloodless furtive flower.

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The Silent Pool.

NO light, no air, no sound, no taste, no smell,
Here while we wait to us of life to tell.
No longer can I see where we did enter.
The noiseless water scarcely mirrors us,
The shallow pool that sloping to the centre
Even at the edge seems dull and dangerous.
Dark twisted branches where the leaves are greenest,
A film against the sun, slim-hung above!
Warm hand in hand the while on me thou leanest.
Strong tortured branches wasted as with love!
Shoulder to shoulder, I and thou, arms touching,
My fingers in thy fingers' tenfold clutching.
A pale and captured sky that pines above
Dark twisted branches where the leaves are greenest!
Here while we stand to us of life to tell,
No light, no air, no sound, no taste, no smell.

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Curbing and ruling their submissive tangles
All things that grow here downward oddly curve
Around the pool at unexpected angles,
As if to reach some goal from which they swerve,
Straight trunks that not a storm would answer stirring,
And crawling roots that turn which way preferring,
All maimed and cringing humbly creep and curve
Around the pool at unexpected angles.
Shoulder to shoulder, I and thou, arms touching,
Here while we wait to us of life to tell,
No light, no air, no sound, no taste, no smell,
My fingers in thy fingers' tenfold clutching!

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Piers Gaveston.

I.

O TREES that keep a secret, marble-still,
Like carven pillars round an ivory Saint
Where lovers come to kiss away love's taint,
Why so mysterious? Is it your will
To stand for ever sentinels of ill
And guard all gloomily remote and faint
A place where fails the fretful far complaint,
But pilgrimless, the shrine on Blacklow Hill!

Outside the hips and haws wax red: men pass
And see the glamour of the fervent grass.
We have forgotten: must you then remember
And hide so well the name that once men knew?
Outside the world is loving young September
And your sad temple is but known to few.

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II.

A pathway leads perhaps to life again :
But to this strangeness will my soul be blind
Under the wide incredible soft wind
Sloping along the broad September plain,
As if lost flowers and sighs we sighed in vain
Were saved to make the last of Autumn kind ?
O shall I see the land I left behind,
The same though sound and sweetness here be
slain !

Marlowe, great voice compassionate and strong,
This is the place where thou hast held me long.
Why linger near this most unholy cross ?
Men had no mercy. Has September none ?
The hawthorn's blood is dripping on the moss.
O Blacklow Hill, O Piers of Gaveston !

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III.

Near narrow water curving through the green
And by the downward willows left unstirred,
Alike the first, the second and the third
Holding the marsh flower purple rosmarine,
They stand as though not for the first time seen,
And pale, with parted lips, without a word,
With deep dark curls of gold profoundly blurred,
Against a crooked tree on which they lean.

The wind shakes in their hair a golden flame.
Upon them falls each withered withy-leaf.
The first is Beauty clad in Love's proud weeds,
And Love the second with the badge of grief,
A thorny wreath rose-red, a breast that bleeds.
The third is Sorrow : but men call him Shame.

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Love lies Bleeding.

I WONDER when our souls shall fall apart
No longer faintly each to each as now,
When parted dreams and empty days allow
No more to seem my own thy beating heart,
Thy mouth that since I left it for my part
Upon some upturned face or yearning brow
Will leave the glory which the laurel bough
Or golden sanctity could not impart!

O fingers trained by love to strongly twine
About such visionary hands as thine!
O melodies and colours meant to be
With all dear scented things the praise of thee!
O mouth so like the vivid eglantine!
O love so like the paler columbine!

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